

CAN A SINGLE WOMAN BE A MISSIONARY?

Updated March 8, 2007 (first published September 12, 1999)(David Cloud, Fundamental Baptist Information Service, P.O. Box 610368, Port Huron, MI 48061, 866-295-4143, fbns@wayoflife.org; for instructions about subscribing and unsubscribing or changing addresses, see the information paragraph at the end of the article) -

Some people have questioned whether it is scriptural for a single girl to be a missionary, and personally I am surprised at such thinking. While women cannot teach men or usurp authority over men (1 Tim. 2:12), they are very important to the ministry of the Word of God and to the work of the churches.

Many women accompanied the apostles in the upper room after the resurrection (Acts 1:12-14). Paul refers to the women who labored with him in the gospel (Phil. 4:3). Phebe assisted Paul and represented the Cenchrean church in a ministry to the church at Rome (Rom. 16:1-2). The church was instructed to "assist her in whatsoever business she hath need of you." This illustrates what the Apostle Paul thought about single women in the work of the Lord.

It is obvious that single women have been a great blessing to church and missionary work from the first century until now.

My wife, Linda, was a single missionary before we were married. She shares the following ways that a single woman can help on the foreign mission field:

"Especially in third world countries, single lady missionaries can be a real blessing and asset to the churches. Many times the missionary pastor's wife has to home school her children, often while attempting to learn or keep up with a foreign language, keep house, do shopping, entertain, etc. in a totally different culture. Therefore, it is a real blessing when an unencumbered single girl can help with teaching Sunday School, visiting ladies and sick, helping create Sunday School and vacation Bible school materials in the culture and language of the country, teach ladies in the church how to read, help with church music, (sometimes even teaching others to play instruments or instructing them in singing that the church will be able to take over in its own music program someday), and reach out to ladies and children both in the church area and in villages with the gospel. Discipling ladies and girls who have been saved takes a lot of time, time that a married woman often doesn't have. Teaching Bible clubs in different areas of the city or in surrounding villages can be a way to reach into the homes of unbelievers, but often a married woman cannot leave her post at home to engage in these activities. In some cases, single girls teach girls and ladies in Bible colleges; help a great deal in the secretarial part of running Bible correspondence courses; help in orphanages; teach English classes as a way of making new contacts with the lost; etc. A single woman missionary can do nearly everything a married one can do, but oftentimes has time and freedom to do a lot more than the married missionary.

"In the short time our daughter Jyoti was in the country of Nepal this summer she was asked to do the following: Teach special classes to teenage girls in two different churches; write the four-part harmony for an entire hymnbook in the Nepali language, making it print-ready; take part in three different ladies' meetings (both in teaching, skits, special music, and in a drama presentation); visit several girls and ladies she met during her brief stay and share the gospel with them; disciple and steer back on track a girl who had recently graduated from a university there; accompany the pastor's wife and the associate pastor's wife to various Bible studies and ladies' reading classes (designed to be evangelistic while teaching ladies to read); prepare the arrangements for, play the music and oversee the recording of three "professional quality" cassette tapes of choruses and hymns in order to produce the only non-CCM Christian cassettes in Nepal; visit the sick in hospitals; travel to villages for Bible studies and evangelism among the ladies; and witness to many girls and ladies she met while she was there. Needless to say, she didn't have time to complete all of the above, though she did do most. But these were activities the pastor of the church and the pastor's wife asked her to participate in. When she left they urged her to come back as soon as possible to continue helping in the work there. (However, in her case, serving in Nepal will hardly be like serving on a foreign field as she lived there until she was twelve and feels it is very much home in many ways.)" (Linda Cloud, September 4, 1999).

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